

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 SEOUL 00046 050705Z  
ACTION PM-05

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 H-01 INR-07 L-03  
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06  
BIB-01 FCC-01 OTPE-00 /059 W  
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R 050608Z JAN 78  
FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8511  
SECDEF WASHDC  
INFO CINCPAC  
USFK KOREA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 46

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: MARR, KS, US  
SUBJ: CONVERSION OF AFRTS TO NON-APPROPRIATED STATUS

REF: (A) SECDEF 230512Z NOV 77, (B) USFK 150644Z DEC 77

SUMMARY: COMERCIAL ADVERTISING ON AFKN, THE AFRTS AFFILIATE IN KOREA, COULD SUBJECT PROGRAMMING TO REGULATION. THIS COULD CREATE SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS, INCLUDING POSSIBLY THE DILUTION OF NEWS AND ENTERTAINMENT BROADCASTS. THIS APPROACH SHOULD NOT BE LEGISLATED IF PRELIMINARY SOUNDINGS INDICATE THAT THE ROKG WILL ATTEMPT TO USE THE CHANGE TO EXERCISE CONTROL OF BROADCAST CONTENT. END SUMMARY.

1. THE MOST DISTURBING ELEMENT IN THE PROPOSAL TO PERMIT COMMERCIAL ADVERTISING ON AFKN IS THE LIKELIHOOD THAT A BROADCAST AGREEMENT MIGHT BE REQUIRED.

2. A BROADCAST AGREEMENT WOULD PROBABLY SUBJECT AFKN PROGRAMMING AS WELL AS COMMERCIALS TO ROKG CONTROL. THE  
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PAGE 02 SEOUL 00046 050705Z

MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND INFORMATION, THE KCIA AND OTHER ELEMENTS OF THE ROKG HAVE LONG BEEN CONCERNED ABOUT THE ROK PUBLIC'S EASY ACCES TO WORLD NEWS, AND MORE PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT BUT SOMETIMES UNPLEASANT NEWS ABOUT KOREA, THROUGH AFKN. IN SEOUL, FOR EXAMPLE, THERE IS AN "AFKN LISTENERS ASSOCIATION." THE ROKG COULD ATTEMPT TO USE A BROADCAST AGREEMENT TO SUBJECT AFKN TO THE ROK BROADCAST LAW AND ALL

OTHER RELATED LAWS AND MEASURES, TO INCLUDE THE ANTI-COMMUNIST LAW AND EMERGENCY MEASURE NINE.

3. KNOWING THAT THE KOREANS HAVE A TENDENCY TO RESPOND EMOTIONALLY ON OCCASION, THE USG SHOULD NOT WILLINGLY PLACE AND IMPORTANT SOURCE OF NEWS AND ENTERTAINMENT FOR ITS MILITARY FORCES IN A VULNERABLE POSITION BY OPENING UP THE POSSIBILITY THAT IT MIGHT BE SUBJECTED TO KOREAN LAW.

4. IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT ADVERTISING ON AFKN RADIO OR TV WILL HAVE A MAJOR IMPACT IN KOREA SINCE THE COMMERCIALS WILL NECESSARILY BE IN ENGLISH AND THE AUDIENCE THEREBY LIMITED. THE ROKG HAS, HOWEVER, BEEN SENSITIVE TO AFKN AS A STIMULUS OF DEMAND FOR COLOR TV SETS OR COLOR TV BROADCASTING AS A CONSEQUENCE OF THE INITIATION THIS YEAR OF AFKN TV BROADCASTS IN COLOR. THE GOVERNMENT COULD THUS BE EXPECTED TO BE AT LEAST EQUALLY SENSITIVE TO AFKN'S POTENTIAL FOR CREATING A DEMAND IN KOREA FOR ADVERTISED US PRODUCTS WHICH ARE EXCLUDED FROM THE KOREAN MARKET THROUGH ROKG IMPORT LAWS AND FOREIGN EXCHANGE REGULATIONS. IN ADDITION, BY CARRYING ADVERTISING IN ENGLISH AFKN WOULD BE REGARDED BY OTHER KOREAN COMMERCIAL BROADCAST STATIONS AS A COMPETITOR. KOREAN ADVERTISORS COULD REQUEST PERMISSION TO ADVERTISE THEIR PRODUCTS TO THE AFKN AUDIENCE, BOTH IN ENGLISH AND KOREAN. THESE DEVELOPMENTS COULD IN TURN INCREASE THE DEMAND FOR SUBJECTING

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 SEOUL 00046 050705Z

AFKN TO THE RESTRAINTS ON ADVERTISING AND PROGRAMMING IMPOSED BY THE BROADCAST LAW.

5. AN ALTERNATIVE WHICH WOULD FINESSE THE PROBLEM OF THE BROADCAST LAW WOULD BE TO CONVERT AFKN TO CABLE TV. THIS WOULD PROBABLY BE TOO EXPENSIVE TO BE PRACTICAL, HOWEVER.

6. THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT REQUIRING AFKN TO CARRY COMMERCIAL ADVERTISING IN ORDER TO PRODUCE REVENUE COULD RESULT IN THE LOSS OR CURTAILMENT OF THIS IMPORTANT MORALE BOOSTER FOR US MILITARY FORCES IN KOREA. ANY MOVEMENT IN THIS DIRECTION SHOULD NOT, THEREFORE, BE WRITTEN INTO LAW UNTIL WE ARE ABLE TO ASCERTAIN THE ROKG'S ATTITUDE. IF THAT ATTITUDE PROVES NEGATIVE, AS WE HAVE INDICATED ABOVE THAT IT MIGHT, THE PROPOSAL SHOULD BE ABANDONED. EMBASSY BELIEVES IT WOULD BE UNWISE EVEN TO RAISE THIS QUESTION WITH ROKG AT THIS TIME, BUT IS PREPARED TO DO SO IF REQUIRED.

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## Message Attributes

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**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
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**Review Markings:**  
Sheryl P. Walter  
Declassified/Released  
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20 Mar 2014  
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